The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-SecretaryGeneral for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council has not discussed the situation in Yemen since October (see S/PV.7797). For this reason, I believe that it is a particularly opportune moment for the Council to receive an update on the political negotiations, including for a renewed cessation of hostilities, and on the dire humanitarian situation.

I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in Yemen.

The past several months have seen a dangerous escalation of military activities, with tragic consequences for the Yemeni people. Armed hostilities have continued in many areas, including Sana'a governorate, Taiz city and the border area between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Civilians in Taiz continue to suffer from indiscriminate shelling in residential areas of the city, with such attacks increasing in recent days. Ground shelling and air strikes have also escalated along the western coastline following the launch of Operation Golden Spear by the Government of Yemen and allied forces.

Both sides continue to claim in the media that they have made significant military progress, but I remain convinced that there is no possibility of a military solution. We are witnessing daily attacks and counterattacks. Those who seek a military solution will only prolong the suffering caused by the war, allow the terrorist threat to continue to grow, and deepen the challenges of Yemen's eventual recovery following the war. The continued military activity is all the more tragic as a viable proposal for peace is on the table and within reach of both parties. With political courage and will, this war can be stopped.

On 18 December, the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting in Riyadh with the Foreign Ministers of the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and the United Kingdom, and I was invited to join. The meeting ended with an urgent call for a rapid recommitment to a cessation of hostilities, followed by a two-week preparatory period in order to look into the violations that have taken place every time a cessation of hostilities has been announced.

We want to ensure that this time the parties honour the cessation of hostilities fully and effectively in order to allow assistance to be provided to the Yemeni people. My Office has completed preparations for the preparatory meeting, which includes a five-day workshop for representatives from both sides to develop a concrete joint implementation plan to ensure the strengthening of the cessation of hostilities and that no violations occure by either party. The successful implementation of the cessation of hostilities will bring about a much-needed respite for many Yemenis, as well as hope after suffering long months of war, and will pave the way for progress towards a political agreement.

I met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan two days after he took up his position. He stated that his country was willing to host the workshop. He also expressed the Kingdom's willingness to provide any assistance needed for the people of Yemen and to support peace in that country. We were not surprised at that stance, given that Jordan hosts a large number of neighbouring countries' citizens, including Yemenis, providing them safe shelter and basic health services.

In that regard, I welcome the positive response of the Yemeni Government and the fact that it has agreed to send its representatives to the workshop. I hope that the delegation of Ansar Allah and General People's Congress will confirm their participation at that gathering.

On the political front, the statement issued at the meeting on 18 December in Riyadh called on the parties to respond constructively to the United Nations

proposal I submitted in preparation for a next round of cosultations. While the parties still have some concerns and reservations, I will continue my consultations with them in order to arrive at compromises and a convergence of views.

To a large extent, this proposal builds on the main points discussed during the Kuwait consultations and paves the way towards a political solution that is in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), and the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism. It is also the first step along the path towards peace and sets the stage for a transitional period in accordance with the National Dialogue Conference decisions. The international community has welcomed that proposal.

In November, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the United States helped us to ensure that the delegation of Ansar Allah and General People's Congress agreed to a road map as a negotiable working paper, which was a positive development. However, they did not provide any practical proposals or detailed plans for security arrangements dealing with military withdrawal or the handover of heavy weaponry. Therefore, no progress was possible, specially given that the security component is essential and fundamental to peace. We discussed these topics in details during my latest visit to Sana'a.

Undoubtedly, the decision by Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress to set up a parallel Government within the Supreme Political Council throws up an additional barrier along the road to peace and has an adverse impact on trust between the parties. More than once, we have said how dangerous it is to take unilateral decisions in these difficult times and how that will impact the revitalization of State institutions.

On the Government level, since my previous briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7797) I have undertaken two visits to Aden, under difficult and sensitive security conditions. My latest trip took place on 16 January, when I met Yemeni President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, Prime Minister Ahmed Obaid Bin-Daghr and Foreign Minister Abdulmalik Al-Mikhlafi. I called on the President to commit publicly to the consultations based on my proposals made in Kuwait and thereafter. Continued criticism of the proposals without agreeing to discuss them in order to make amendments undermine the path towards peace and prolongs the conflict.

I emphasized, and assured President Hadi, that what was being presented by the United Nations were proposals open for discussion in order to reach a comprehensive solution acceptable to all sides and that there was no other way to bring about peace in Yemen and to afford all Yemenis an opportunity to come to the table to address their country's challenges, including the south's historic grievances.

Yemen's economic and humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. According to humanitarian organizations, 18.8 million Yemenis require humanitarian assistance and 2.2 Yemeni children are malnourished — one of the highest rates of acute malnutrition in the world. That is not only a result of poverty, but of a deterioration in basic services in the areas of health, water and sanitation, as well as other factors. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, my colleague Mr. Stephen O'Brien, will be able to provide members more details on the war's terrible impact on the humanitarian situation.

In that regard, the continued closure of the Sana'a airport has added to the overall hardship. Many people who want to leave Yemen to seek medical treatment abroad cannot do so, while Yemenis abroad are unable to return home. As well, the journey to and from Aden airport is too difficult for many to undertake, leaving many people with no option. I call on the Government of Yemen to allow for the resumption of commercial flights to Sana'a without further delay. And I call on all parties to ensure the safety of air navigation. I have addressed a formal letter to all parties calling on them to ensure the safety of the airport and of all civilian commercial aircraft.

The extensive delay in the payment of civil servants' salaries has severely undercut the purchasing power of most Yemeni households. The continuing lack of payments will drive ever more people into destitution. The Government of Yemen, the Central Bank, Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress must work together to ensure the resumption of salary payments to civil servants in all areas of the country. Earlier today, I received information from the Government that salary payments had resumed.

It will also be critical, in cooperation with UNICEF and the World Bank, to fully fund the social welfare fund that provides cash payments to the most vulnerable people in Yemen. I also encourage international partners to find ways to ensure access to hard currency

for importers of basic commodities, so as to guarantee the continuity of such imports.

There is a clear path out of the violence that plagues Yemen. Although it requires some concessions, the proposals that I put forward are based on the concerns and needs of both sides and take in.o account the political, security and social situation in the country, while providing for a secure future for Yemen and Yemenis. I will present the sides with a detailed timetable that reflects the political and security stages and their sequencing, as we envisage it. I call upon the parties to demonstrate political wisdom and responsibility in order to make the necessary progress.

Since my previous briefing to the Council, over the past few weeks I have held meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Jordan, as well as Sweden. I also met with the Deputy Foreign Minsters of China and the Russian Federation. I have seen that there is in fact consensus for the efforts of the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to mention the support I received from the Russian Embassy in Sana'a during my latest visit. I hope that the international community will continue to bring pressure to bear on the parties so that they recommit within the next few days to a cessation of hostilities. I am confident that improvements in the security situation will open up space for a renewed political dialogue, which we hope will bring about a solution.

I have seen for myself the suffering of the Yemeni people. I just returned from a devastated Sana'a. I saw at first hand the suffering of Yemeni women and men. I hope that Yemeni leaders will be able to see the impact that this tragedy has had on the country, take the bold decision to commit to a political solution and put an end to the conflict. The solution to the Yemeni situation is not external. The United Nations and the international community can help to promote, mediate and bring pressure to bear. But the key decisions and compromises must be made by Yemenis and will depend upon their ability to make consessions. Failing that, history will judge them harshly.

The President: I thank Mr. Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: Since my previous briefing (see S/PV.7797), the humanitarian situaition in Yemen has further deteriortated, while the armed conflict has continued to intensify, with daily air strikes and armed clashes. In the past week, we received reports of at least 365 conflict-related security incidents, up from 231 in the previous week, and at least 100 airstrikes in Taiz governorate alone. During the last quarter of 2016, approximately 2,400 incidents consisting of air strikes, armed clashes and shelling were reported throughout Yemen. This is a 12 per cent increase from the previous three months. Today I am particularly concerned about civilians caught up in the crossfire in Mokha, Taiz governorate's coastal region. I have received reports that more than 5,000 families are fleeing.

It is clear that in this fight the most affected are the ordinary Yemeni people, who continue to suffer. Overall, more than two thirds of the population — an alarming 18.8 million, as we have heard — is in need of humanitarian and protection assistance, including an astounding 10.3 million Yemenis who require immediate assistance to save or sustain their lives. This is about the size of the entire population of Sweden, and the numbers are rising. More than 2 million people are internally displaced. By 31 December, 7,469 Yemenis had been killed and 40,483 injured owing to the conflict. The true number is likely to be higher, as we report only cases by health facilities that are still functioning — a mere 45 per cent.

Overall, the plight of children remains grim, with a child under the age of 5 dying every 10 minutes of preventable causes. A grim illustration of the impact on children is the airstrikes two weeks ago near a petrol station next to a school in Sana'a governorate's Nihm district that resulted in the death of one schoolgirl and injury to four others. A week earlier, on 3 January, a school was completely destroyed in Sa'ada governorate's Safra district, reportedly — and luckily — without any child casualties. Since the hostilities began in March 2015, more than 1,400 children have been killed and over 2,140 injured. Another 1,441 children, some as young as 8, have been recruited by warring parties. The actual numbers are likely to be much higher.

Beyond the direct casualties of the armed conflict, there are also the so-called silent deaths of Yemenis that go largely unnoticed and unrecorded. Girls, boys, women and men are dying of hunger and diseases that are easily preventable and treatable. Unfortunately, vital food commodities and medicines cannot be imported easily owing to access restrictions imposed by all parties. People with chronic diseases, including

high blood pressure and diabetes, who are not receiving life-sustaining treatment due to medical shortages are slowly dying.

The conflict in Yemen is now the primary driver of the largest food-security emergency in the world. If there is no immediate action, famine is now a possible scenario for 2017. There are currently 14 million food-insecure people, of whom half are severely food-insecure. This means that Yemenis are not able to feed themselves adequately and are frequently forced to miss meals or eat food with poor nutritional value. At least 2 million people need emergency food assistance to survive. Again, the situation for children is especially grave, as 2.2 million babies, boys and girls are acutely malnourished, and almost half a million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition. This represents a 63 per cent increase since late 2015. Children are going to bed hungry every night.

Shockingly, incidents of gender-based violence have reportedly increased by more than 63 per cent since before the conflict. As of this month, there have been 10,806 reported cases. To be clear, this means more rapes, more forced marriages, more child brides and many more unspeakable acts of violence against girls, boys and women compared with two years ago.

All parties to the conflict are failing to take precautions to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure. So far, the United Nations has verified more than 325 attacks on schools, health facilities, markets, roads, bridges and even water points. More than two thirds of the damage to public infrastructure is a result of airstrikes. Violations of international humanitarian and human rights law continue unabated and largely with impunity. Attacks against hospitals, schools and other protected civilian structures and facilities must stop immediately. International norms must be respected.

Granting rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is a key obligation under international humanitarian law. Yet people face major challenges in accessing humanitarian aid, and humanitarian actors face impediments to access people in need, including due to active fighting, insecurity, bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of funding.

The closure of Sana'a airport to commercial flights since 9 August has had a disproportionate impact on Yemen's civilians and further increases the humanitarian caseload. The lack of in-country specialist medical care means that more than 20,000 Yemenis are unable to seek treatment abroad. Similarly, life-saving medicines cannot be flown in. Students are unable to resume their studies abroad, and Yemenis outside the country seeking to go home are unable to do so. In addition, the suspension of commercial flights has also meant that journalists can no longer travel to Sana'a and report on Yemen's grave humanitarian situation.

We expect all parties to the conflict, including the Government of Yemen, to do the utmost with the Saudi-led coalition to reopen the airport and airspace to commercial flights. This could include addressing security concerns through previously established flight routing through Bisha, Saudi Arabia, or other airports within the Saudi-led coalition.

Humanitarians now fill in for collapsing public institutions, which at this scale is beyond both our capacity and our remit. The health-care system is in decline. Public infrastructure such as bridges and ports, as well as water and sanitation systems, is being destroyed. The near-collapse of the country's social security and economic institutions has a multiplier effect on humanitarian needs. Yemen's poorest families, widows, orphans, people with disabilities and the elderly are no longer receiving a monthly allowance of 2,500 rials — about $10 — per person. In addition, 1.25 million civil servants, including nurses, doctors and teachers, do not receive salaries regularly. Yemen's middle class is growing poorer, and many are no longer able to provide for their families. While a batch of money arrived in Aden earlier this month, no information has been received as to whether it will reach civil servants in all governorates.

Yemen's contracting economy, the associated liquidity crisis and the continued depreciation of the local currency mean further hardship for Yemen's people. Ninety percent of Yemen's food and fuel and almost all medical supplies are imported. Only 40 per cent of pre-crisis amounts of fuel are now entering the country. Import restrictions are leading to price increases. For instance, in December the price of wheat flour was 25 per cent higher than in the pre-crisis period. Petroleum prices rose by more than 33 per cent. Cooking gas is now 60 per cent more expensive.

The sharp decline in the Central Bank's foreign reserves combined with its move to Aden and lack of liquidity has had a ruinous socioeconomic impact. Yemen could run out of wheat within months unless traders can access lines of credit in the coming weeks.

Foreign banks no longer accept financial transactions with many of Yemen's commercial banks. We must mobilize to sustain the traders' ability to import, replenish the country's stocks of staple food and reverse the trend of growing food insecurity and potential starvation. In addition, some humanitarian organizations are struggling to find enough cash to implement projects. The end result is a country in economic distress, which is translating into acute humanitarian need.

Let me provide the Council with an update on the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM). As of 23 January, UNVIM had cleared 324 vessels from 394 requests. Since the beginning of operations, more than 5 million metric tons of cargo have been discharged, including 2 million tons of food and just over 1 million tons of fuel. During this period, 54 vessels were not cleared; 20 vessel clearances were revoked, 28 cancelled and six declined. The Mechanism has completed 21 inspections of suspicious cargo or information presented. Delays in receiving clearances are also due to restrictions imposed by the Saudi-led coalition, such as the hampering of vessels' access to Yemeni Red Sea ports and in the absence of clear lists of prohibited items.

Once goods are offloaded, there are often additional bureaucratic impediments that slow down the transport of commodities to their final destinations. All parties have to be held responsible for those impediments. Moreover, ports have been damaged and need to be repaired. Hudaydah port, Yemen's main port — through which 80 per cent of imports arrive and which was damaged in the conflict in 2015 — has not been rehabilitated. A vessel carrying four mobile cranes procured by the World Food Programme (WFP) has arrived in the Red Sea, but has been ordered by the Saudi authorities to leave Yemeni waters and is now anchored 50 miles off Yemen's coast. The vessel is awaiting the coalition's approval to berth at the port. Those cranes will boost the port's capacity in handling humanitarian cargo. Two of the cranes will be used exclusively by the United Nations, by the WFP, and help expedite the timely delivery of vital humanitarian aid supplies.

In spite of the difficult conditions and tremendous challenges, the humanitarian community delivers. Together in 2016, we reached 5.6 million Yemenis in need with direct assistance and via a coordinated response in 22 governorates. There are five operational hubs — in Aden, Hudaydah, Ibb, Sa'ada, and Sana'a. More than 114 humanitarian organizations are working in Yemen and are delivering life-saving and life-sustaining assistance across the entire county.

In the darkness of conflict, there are some glimpses of hope. Thanks to the swift intervention by humanitarian partners, which established 26 cholera treatment centres and launched a massive containment campaign through water and sanitation interventions, the cholera outbreak, which started in October, is now in decline. We must remain vigilant, as there are still more than 18,000 suspected cases.

In recent weeks, there have been some improvements in overcoming bureaucratic impediments, especially in terms of issuing visas to humanitarian workers. Dialogue is also becoming more effective in leading to a better understanding with parties to the conflict and their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. I welcome the efforts of the Saudi authorities and other partners to strengthen the dialogue and information-sharing with humanitarian partners to overcome the challenges faced in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Yemen.

For 2017, approximately $2 billion is required to support the humanitarian response, targeting 10 million of the most vulnerable people in Yemen. The increase over 2016 is directly tied to the breakdown of the socioeconomic order, increased suffering and the absence of a cessation of hostilities and a political settlement. The parties to the conflict are closing their ears to the desperate pleas of the Yemeni people and to those of the broader international community. I ask Member States to pledge generously at the forthcoming Yemen pledging conference, to be held late in March.

In conclusion, I request that Council members once again call for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. The Yemeni people need a political solution to the horrendous conflict they are caught up in. I also request that Council members, first, use their influence over the parties to the conflict to ensure that they respect international humanitarian law and provide timely, full and unimpeded humanitarian access; secondly, hold parties to the conflict accountable for breaching their obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure; thirdly, facilitate an increase in commercial imports of essential supplies, facilitate the import of cranes to Hudaydah, support the rehabilitation of the port and extend the mandate of the United

Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen beyond April; fourthly, demand the resumption of commercial flights to Sana'a; and, fifthly, facilitate lines of credit for the purchase of staple food, including wheat, to traders and Yemeni banks, and urge the Government of Yemen to use funds from the first batch of newly printed Yemeni riyals optimally, equitably and without political bias and ensure that civil servants are paid throughout the country.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings.

I would like to highlight the work done by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and to convey my delegation's support for his tireless, rigorous efforts to find a solution to put an end to the conflict. Similarly, I also express our deep gratitude to all those who provide humanitarian aid to Yemen for their tireless and courageous efforts to bring some hope to its beleaguered people.

Uruguay is appalled by the worsening conflict in Yemen, where the worst violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights occur on a daily basis. The fact that the serious conflict in Yemen has received less media coverage than other conflicts, such as those in Syria or South Sudan, does not absolve the perpetrators, the international community nor, much less, the Council, of their responsibility. By way of illustration, how many meetings on Syria have we convened since the last time there was a briefing on Yemen, on 31 October (see S/PV.7797)? We have held no fewer than 13 such meetings.

Uruguay is concerned about the ongoing violence and the dismantling of institutions in Yemen, which have made possible the spread of terrorism. Groups such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula have expanded their operations and found the perfect haven for their activities in the absence of any State presence.

We regret the long stagnation in the peace process, which has not consolidated any positive results. Nevertheless, we support the resumption of the peace process, which for too many months has not yielded any concrete results and is currently constrained due to a very fragile road map. Uruguay once again calls upon the parties to resume dialogue and to fully comply with their commitment to the ceasefire, in order to bring about an environment that is favourable to the restoration of peace. Stability in Yemen also requires a show of commitment from regional stakeholders and their supporters, in particular from countries that have sway over the parties, in order to vigorously seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Uruguay emphatically condemns the continuing attacks on civilian targets in Yemen. Daily air strikes and mortar and missile attacks indiscriminately destroy hospitals, schools, markets, residential buildings and other infrastructure. Cluster munitions, bunker-busting bombs, anti-personnel mines and snipers also create rifts among the civilian population. All stakeholders in Yemen continue to show total contempt for the rules of international humanitarian law, thereby giving rise to great suffering and catastrophic consequences among the civilian population trapped in combat zones.

Yemen, like Syria, is reaching levels of dehumanization like we have seldom seen before. Uruguay condemns all attacks on civilians, be they in Yemen, Syria, Iraq or elsewhere, regardless of who carries them out. We cannot have double standards on this matter. Those responsible for these abhorrent atrocities and their accomplices should be held accountable for their crimes.

We are also worried about the devastating food security crisis that affects more than 14 million Yemenis, over half the population of Yemen. The images we have seen this month of January of Yemeni children literally dying from hunger should suffice to elicit a reaction from us and to urgently call for immediate and unfettered access to humanitarian aid, which regrettably continues to be blocked by both parties to the conflict.

It is time to revitalize the ceasefire and to find a way to return to the negotiating table. We all know that these conflicts have no military solution. The only resolution can be broad and inclusive political agreements reached in direct negotiations among the parties. That should continue to be the main objective of the Security Council and the entire international community. The millions of Yemenis affected by the crisis have the

right — and we the obligation — to tirelessly continue to seek out the best options for achieving peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to you, Mr. Olof Skoog, as Ambassador of Sweden and President of the Security Council, for giving us this opportunity to address the Council. This is an opportune occasion for us to express our sincere congratulations to your delegation and the brotherly delegations of Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Italy and Bolivia at the start of the journey in the Security Council to promote international peace and security.

It would be remiss of me not to express my sincere congratulations and good wishes to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres. We believe that his competency will enrich the work of the United Nations. The Yemeni Government and its delegation in New York are ready to work hand in hand with the Secretary-General to find a solution to the Yemeni crisis that would end the coup d'état against the authority and legitimate institutions in Yemen, as well as the aggressive interference by Iran in the affairs of Yemen and of the wider region.

Today marks two years since the start of the unjust war launched by Houthi militias that formed an alliance with the former President against our people and their Republic. It is clear that that plan is falling apart because of the determination of our people and their noble uprising throughout Yemen to eradicate political factions intent on wiping out Yemen's democratic federal State project — the vision of His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, backed by the Yemeni people and its social and political powers.

Since the start of the Houthi coup against our State and its legitimate institutions, in September 2014, we in the Yemeni Government have remained resolutely determined to fully reject bullying and the use of weapons and force. Instead, we must rely on dialogue and accept the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, which our people also accepted. In the light of the ongoing war of annihilation, which was launched by Iran for the sake of its expansionist policies, we reaffirm our position that a solution must be based on the terms of reference governing a peaceful political transition in Yemen — terms agreed upon and supported by Yemen, the United Nations, the region and the international community — as well as a commitment to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

When it was affirmed that it was difficult to implement that resolution, we underscored that, in sum, as perceived by our people and other friendly countries that yearn for stability in Yemen and full adherence to international law, that resolution means an end to the coup d'état and a restoration of constitutional legitimacy. Coup leaders must abide by those terms and accept the presidency of President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour — the sponsor of the peaceful political transition in Yemen. Therefore, any other initiative or idea that is not in line with those parameters will be unacceptable and irrational because it will not lead to peace; it will result only in superficial solutions and the crisis in Yemen will continue.

The Government of Yemen reiterates its commitment to peace — a trajectory that was started in Geneva, Biel and Kuwait. We will always be committed to sustainable peace based on those three terms of reference. That is why we refused the Kerry ceasefire plan and called upon the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to provide a new plan that is informed by the outcome of the Kuwait meetings and try to build upon it. For we will not agree to setting an international precedent by legitimizing the coup d'état or sustaining it in any way, shape or form.

During a meeting between the President and Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed in the interim capital, Aden, on 16 January, the President stressed that the Government was willing to start work on the De-Escalation and Coordination Committee, which can hold meetings in Dhahran Al-Janoub, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in line with the Kuwaiti agreement, by which coup leaders refuse to abide. We, on the other hand, are committed to the agreement because we believe that no cessation of hostilities can remain in effect without activating all local committees.

Accordingly, last December, the Government accepted the proposal put forward by the Special Envoy to convene a special workshop on the De-Escalation and Coordination Committee, which was scheduled to be held in the Jordanian capital. However, to date the coup leaders have refused to participate in the workshop. Mr. Ahmed stressed that the priority for reaching

peace now is to start the work of the De-Escalation and Coordination Committee. The President has expressed his willingness to announce a cessation of hostilities — for the eighth time — if conditions are conducive to supervising such.

Copious information has been provided on the humanitarian suffering in regions under the control of the coup leaders. Unfortunately, there is no talk about the carnage in Tai'z. We would like to point out that a policy of collective punishment has been carried out against our people over the past two years in every area under the control of the coup leaders.

The coup leaders have also been plundering the State's resources. They have taken all of the money in the Central Bank and have engaged in, and profited from, unlawful trading activity. The looted billions from the Central Bank. That compelled the Yemeni Government to relocate the Central Bank to the interim capital, Aden, after the State declared bankruptcy.

Over the past two months, the Government has tried to generate the necessary liquidity to pay the salaries of civil servants and military personnel. Despite the escalation of punishment by the coup leaders, who threatened any party that cooperated with the Government in facilitating the payment of salaries, yesterday we were successful in transferring all Sana'a salaries to the Al-Kuraimi Islamic Microfinance Bank. We have provided the Office of the Special Envoy copies of all the pertinent reports, agreements and checks.

On 22 January, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs sent a letter to the Special Envoy requesting his urgent personal intervention to put pressure on the Houthis and Mr. Saleh to ensure that salaries reached those in need without any obstacles or interference. It is a humanitarian matter and not a political issue. We, in turn, call upon the Security Council to bring pressure to bear on coup leaders in order to facilitate the transfer of salaries to persons in areas under their control so that we do not add to the complexity of the humanitarian situation.

I would like to express my Government's concern about ongoing Houthi militia exploitation of the port at Hudeydah, which they control, as well as other facilities for the provision of fuel, health-care supplies, medication and food. Unfortunately, they are manipulating access to such commodities for blackmail and to subvert trade in order to make enormous ill-gained profits at the expense of the dire humanitarian situation faced by the people of Yemen.

The upheaval created by those responsible for the coup d'état has reached unprecedented levels, in total disregard for human dignity. They are recruiting women and children. Official reports indicate that the militias have recruited 10,000 children and thrust them into the line of fire. That is to be expected from people who have indiscriminately planted in our territory thousands of anti-personnel mineswhich are internationally prohibited. Our people will pay a steep price for such actions after the end of this criminal war.

The continued punishment of Tai'z and the closure of its airport by those responsible for the coup should also be a cause of concern to the international community. Thousands of our brave Yemeni people, including journalists, students, activists, academics and politicians, continue to suffer under the yoke of imprisonment and detention by the militias, which have turned Yemen into a huge jail.

By the end of 2016, the number of detainees had reached 4,414, with 204 of them children. I have personally sent letters to the former and current Secretaries-General, the President of the Security Council, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, the members of the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), and the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, appealing to their moral conscience to intervene and pressure the militias to end the suffering of those detained and set them free without preconditions or delay. We must allow their relatives to contact them and learn of their fate. To date, unfortunately, that has not been achieved. I told the Special Envoy that we, as the legitimate authorities in the liberated areas, hold no detainees at all. If there are any, we stand ready to discuss their release. Why should we punish people by depriving them of their freedom simply because they refused to accept the coup d'état?

As we all know, the Council will meet tomorrow to discuss the final report (see S/2016/73) submitted by the Panel of Experts on Yemen. I met with the members of the Panel yesterday, and they stressed that their investigations proved that the Houthis and Saleh had no interest in peaceful solutions; they rely on violence as an instrument to achieve their ends. Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh still controls the billions of dollars that he stole and uses them to destabilize the

country and finance the terrorist cells in Yemen. The Government has invited the Panel of Experts to all the areas that it controls. We will work for the success of the sanctions committee's efforts. I would like to thank Ambassador Koro Bessho, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his wise leadership of the Panel.

Before concluding, I would like to underscore the victories that the Yemeni people and armed forces have achieved, as well as their courageous resistance in defeating the militias on all fronts, with the support of the alliance, to restore legitimacy in Yemen, under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates. The latest such victory was the liberation of the port of Mokha and all areas south of the Red Sea. We have accordingly stood steadfast against all threats posed to international navigation.

As everyone knows, those responsible for the coup have, at the instigation of Iran and by using Iranian-made missiles, targeted the United Arab Emirates ship *Swift* and a Spanish vessel transporting liquid natural gas, as well as United States naval ships. Our armed forces achieved further victories in Nihm, near Sana'a. We have been forced to close the Sana'a International Airport to protect civilians and passengers. Given the current military clashes, the Government can in no measure ensure aerial navigation safety. People can, however, reach all parts of Yemen and use the airports in Aden, Seiyun and Riyan, where normal operations have been saliently illustrated by the resumption of departing and arriving commercial flights.

In conclusion, I cannot but stress that the Government firmly believes in the serious work, in cooperation with Mr. António Guterres, to revive the effective partnership required to restore Yemen. We invite the Secretary-General to visit the interim capital so that he can see the developments on the ground for himself. We call on all United Nations agencies to return to the interim capital of Aden now that we can provide the necessary facilities, including on the security level.

We would also like to renew our full support to the efforts made by Mr. Ahmed, the Security Council and the Ambassadors of the group of 18 to bring about peace and stability in Yemen. Furthermore, we reiterate our thanks and deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Arab Republic of Egypt and all the Arab coalition countries that are working diligently towards restoring legitimacy in Yemen. We call upon all members of the Security Council to continue their unified efforts aimed at confronting and settling the crisis that began in 2011. Thanks to this unified stand, much has been achieved in Yemen. We call upon the Council to take a firm position against those responsible for the coup and pressure them to comply with the relevant international resolutions.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.